

## Third Sunday of Advent – December 16, 2018 – Good Shepherd Parish

### Scripture Reading: Zephaniah 3:14-18a

Shout for joy, O daughter Zion!  
Sing joyfully, O Israel!  
Be glad and exult with all your heart,  
O daughter Jerusalem!  
The LORD has removed the judgment against you  
he has turned away your enemies;  
the King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst,  
you have no further misfortune to fear.  
On that day, it shall be said to Jerusalem:  
Fear not, O Zion, be not discouraged!  
The LORD, your God, is in your midst,  
a mighty savior;  
he will rejoice over you with gladness,  
and renew you in his love,  
he will sing joyfully because of you,  
as one sings at festivals.

### Psalm: Isaiah 12:2-3, 4, 5-6

R. (6) Cry out with joy and gladness: for among  
you is the great and Holy One of Israel.

God indeed is my savior;  
I am confident and unafraid.  
My strength and my courage is the LORD,  
and he has been my savior.  
With joy you will draw water  
at the fountain of salvation.

Give thanks to the LORD, acclaim his name;  
among the nations make known his deeds,  
proclaim how exalted is his name.

Sing praise to the LORD for his glorious  
achievement;  
let this be known throughout all the earth.  
Shout with exultation, O city of Zion,  
for great in your midst  
is the Holy One of Israel!

### Scripture Reading: Philippians 4:4-7

Brothers and sisters:  
Rejoice in the Lord always.  
I shall say it again: rejoice!  
Your kindness should be known to all.  
The Lord is near.  
Have no anxiety at all, but in everything,  
by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving,  
make your requests known to God.  
Then the peace of God that surpasses all  
understanding will guard your hearts and minds in  
Christ Jesus.

### Gospel: Luke 3:10-18

The crowds asked John the Baptist, "What should we do?" He said to them in reply, "Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise." Even tax collectors came to be baptized and they said to him, "Teacher, what should we do?" He answered them, "Stop collecting more than what is prescribed." Soldiers also asked him, "And what is it that we should do?" He told them, "Do not practice extortion, do not falsely accuse anyone, and be satisfied with your wages."

Now the people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Christ. John answered them all, saying, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." Exhorting them in many other ways, he preached good news to the people.

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### Advent Prayer Week 3: Joy

Dear Jesus, help us focus on you  
during this busy season. May we stay  
aware of the joy you bring into our lives.  
We want to find you in the everyday  
moments and come with hearts of  
gratitude to your manger on Christmas.  
Amen.

### Prayer to St. Michael

St. Michael the Archangel,  
defend us in battle.  
Be our defense against the wickedness  
and snares of the Devil.  
May God rebuke him, we humbly pray,  
and do thou, O Prince  
of the heavenly hosts,  
by the power of God, thrust into hell  
Satan, and all the evil spirits,  
who prowl about the world  
seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

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### **INVITATION TO PRAY**

*Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.*

#### **Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.**

As you listen to the gospel be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

### **INVITATION TO REFLECT**

*Rejoice!* St. Paul commends this in the Second Reading. “Brothers and sisters: rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again, rejoice.” The word for rejoice in Latin is *gaudete*, so quite naturally this Sunday is called Gaudete Sunday. Why all this glee? Are we finally getting a break from somber Advent? Yes. But there is more to it than that. Remember that Advent is like a retreat that the worldwide Church is making. In this third week we will consider our lives in the context of the great beauty God has put in us and around us. Can we let it in? A line in the First Reading puts this in stunning terms. Zephaniah actually says that the Lord “will sing joyfully because of you, as one sings at festivals.” Have you ever in your life thought that God might break into song because of you? Because of you! Have you ever allowed your idea of God to expand that far? Have you ever imagined God as one who sings you into existence? In one of the books of Narnia by C. S. Lewis, the children are taken back to the very moment of creation. They hear the voice of Aslan (a Christ figure) singing into the wilderness. When the voice goes high, birds, clouds and blue sky appear. At a certain lengthy turn of phrase, the mountains laboriously raise their heads. And a deep vibration bestows the depths of seas. *Creation seems to be made out of melody.*

Alright, scientists have contended about the composition of the physical universe, particles or waves (I think that is the choice). Einstein and many others tried to reconcile these, but no luck. But if I could come even close to describing “string theory,” we might have a third contention. Maybe you have seen TV shows about such a theory, on PBS or elsewhere, a model that some scholars actually do believe unites the two hypotheses. The supposed strings act a lot like sound does, like the vibrations that come forth from a violin string. Instead of saying that particles or waves or uncertainty or whatever else are the basis of matter and force-fields and so on, these scientists instead postulate string-like particles: infinitesimal, ever changing, wriggling. By their dancing shapes, these string circles generate (or constitute, or become, or whatever is the right way to say it) everything that is. How about using this for an insight: God’s gladness sings out joyfully at every instant, and his song is the earth, the galaxies, the people, the plants and chemicals and soaring hawks and encircling planets, droplets of dew and heavy black holes, youthful beauties, ancient wisdoms, and everything else that exists! In this case, we certainly are God’s song. Sunday’s Gospel has people in long rows, gathering to be baptized, expecting the Savior who is to come. Each segment (the crowd, the tax collectors, the soldiers) asks John the Baptist the question: “Teacher, what should we do?” “Let your life sing,” he seems to answer. Let your life sing. Let your life be what it is: God’s joyous, interleaved and always consonant melody. It sounds outwards in deepest joy. Could this be your Advent?

### **INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING**

1. “This reading says it twice: “Be not discouraged! The Lord, your God, is in your midst.” Have you ever remembered the presence of God in the middle of a crisis? What effect did it have on you?
2. St. Paul says we must rejoice in the Lord always, be kind to all, lose anxiety, make our requests known to God and thank God as though he has already granted the requests. This is a long list. Are you better at some than others? Which ones could you improve on?
3. What kind of people went to hear John and then repented? Would you show up to hear someone like John today? What do you want to see and hear? Can people be prophets even though their actions or looks are a departure from the norm? Do you know any prophets? Discuss.

### **INVITATION TO ACT**

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

### **CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY**

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another’s openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

O God, who see how your people faithfully await the feast of the Lord’s Nativity, enable us, we pray, to attain the joys of so great a salvation and to celebrate them always with solemn worship and glad rejoicing. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen